

Graves on Kunsan to be restored

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Kunsan Air Base personnel are restoring nine graves that have been here before the base was created.

"We're protecting them," said Capt. Anthony Figiera, 8th Civil Engineer Squadron chief of construction. "They've been left alone for so many years and not getting the respect they should."

The \$8,000 restoration project, which will be completed Oct. 1, involves clearing plant overgrowth around the graves, making the mounds larger to account for erosion, and placing a fence around each grave site, said Figiera.

Six of the graves are unmarked. The only way they can be recognized as graves are the way the Koreans bury their dead by leaving behind a nearly three-foot high mound.

The unmarked graves are from families long forgotten except one, who belongs to the grandfather of a local resident, said Mr. Kim, Yang Chung, 8th CE construction inspector.

Of the other graves that are marked, two are a husband and wife and another is a woman, said Kim. The tombstones have no dates on them, but written on one side are the names of the children of those who are buried there.

All of the graves predate the base, which means they are more than sixty years old, said Kim. The Japanese wouldn't have allowed any Koreans to



Photos by 1st Lt. Ben Frankenfield

Above: The site by the water tower has three graves. **Below right:** The tombstone has no grave and is considered bad luck to touch.

be buried here after they built the base in 1938.

"It's a Korean belief that if the dead are buried in a pristine location, then they will have a good afterlife," said Kim.

The prime locations are an opening out to the sea or opening up to a field. That explains why five of the graves

are buried on the seaside of Little Coyote, she said. The others are located near the water tower.

"For us, this is one of our smallest projects but one of our most important," said Figiera. "We usually measure our projects in the millions, not in the thousands of dollars. But this one is important to the Korean people."



A construction crew in the background begins work on restoring two graves. Another two unmarked graves wait for a fence to be built around them.